

Gym Ball Exercises for Ankylosing Spondylitis

Ankylosing spondylitis is a disease characterised by inflammation and fusion of the spine. Occasionally other parts of the body may experience symptoms of inflammation. During acute episodes or 'flare-ups', the spine can become more stiff and painful with increased fatigue.

Each joint has a position of comfort which is adopted when it is painful. If the joints are nursed in this position for the duration of the flare, the joint may become fixed in that position.

A successful exercise regime requires a balance of rest and activity. This programme of exercises should be carried out every day to maintain the movement in the joints and muscle strength. Choose a time when least tired, or most effective to ease stiffness (i.e. early morning).

Use the traffic light system to help you through any flare-ups.

Feeling unwell, tired, increased spine pain and increased early morning stiffness (RED)

- Exercise the unaffected joints as normal.
- Perform one or two full range of movement exercises to your affected joints every 2 hours to prevent stiffness.
- Be aware of your posture.

Flare subsiding, less spine pain and reduced early morning stiffness (AMBER)

- Gradually start to build up the repetitions of range of movement exercises.
- Start muscle strengthening exercises.

Spine pain and early morning stiffness reduced significantly, improved well-being (GREEN)

- Continue to gradually build up your exercises to your previous level.
- Continue with your normal activities of daily living.

The following exercises should be performed slowly and smoothly as instructed by your physiotherapist.

Warm up exercise

Two minutes marching on the spot with a high knee raise. Lift arms alternately sideways above your head and forwards above your head.

Neck exercises

If you experience any dizziness while performing these neck exercises, **STOP IMMEDIATELY** and inform your physiotherapist or doctor.

Exercise 1

SITTING ON THE GYM BALL

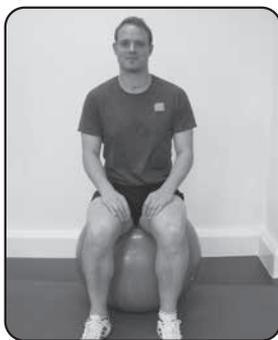
Sit on the gym ball with your feet flat on the floor. Try to maintain an upright posture with your pelvis in neutral.



❑ Exercise 2

LATERAL PELVIC TILTING

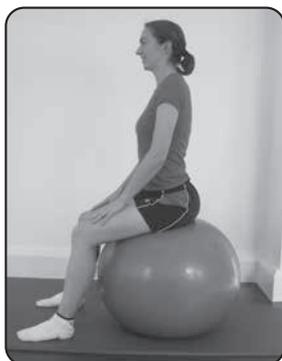
Sitting on the gym ball, slowly tilt your pelvis from side to side.



❑ Exercise 3

PELVIC TILTING

Sitting on the gym ball, slowly tilt your pelvis forwards and backwards.



❑ Exercise 4

ARCHING OVER THE BALL

Sit on the gym ball and slowly walk your feet forwards until the ball is under the middle part of your back. Relax into the extension stretch.



The stretch can be progressed by lifting your arms over your head.

Take care with your neck extension and only do as advised by your physiotherapist.



❑ Exercise 5

SIDE FLEXION OVER THE BALL

Kneel next to the gym ball. Arch your side over the ball as shown. Feel the stretch.



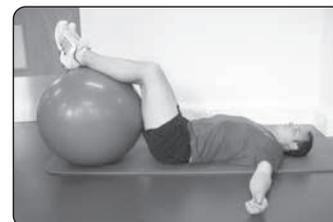
The exercise can be progressed by walking your legs further out to the side and straightening your knees as shown:



❑ Exercise 6

KNEE ROLLING

Lie on the floor with your legs resting on the gym ball. Slowly rotate your legs out to the side as far as you can comfortably. Repeat in the opposite direction.



□ Exercise 7

BRIDGING

Lie on the floor with your feet on top of the gym ball. Tighten your bottom and lift up until your back is straight.



The exercise can be progressed by repeating with your knees straight as shown:



□ Exercise 8

THE PLANK

Rest your shins on the gym ball as shown and lift up into a plank position. Try to keep your back straight and your head level. Hold for a few seconds and slowly lower down.



□ Exercise 9

SUPERMAN STRETCH

Lie over the gym ball as shown. Try to keep your back straight. Lift up one arm and your head. Repeat with the other arm.



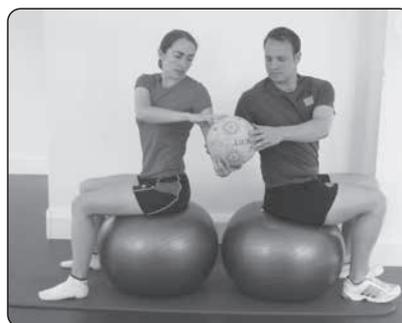
You can progress the exercise by lifting one arm and the opposite leg as shown:



□ Exercise 10

ROTATION BALL PASSES

Sit on a gym ball back to back with a partner. Rotate the top half of your body to pass a ball to your partner. Repeat in the opposite direction.



Only do the exercises prescribed by your physiotherapist.

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by RD&E staff undertaking procedures at the RD&E hospitals.

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